

# Baptist The Recorder

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Baptist Historical Society  
of New South Wales

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## OUR NEXT MEETING

**Date:** 5 August 1993 at 8 pm

**Place:** Morling College Chapel

**Speaker:** Mr H Watkin-Smith, Former Chairman of the Society

**Topic:** The Special Significance of the Goulburn Church Centenary for the History of Baptists in NSW

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## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD 6 MAY 1993

The meeting was opened in prayer by the Chairman, Rev E.R. Rogers, at 8.00 pm with twenty-three members and friends present (details in attendance book).

Apologies were received and accepted from Mrs J. Burton, Mrs R. Blair, Mr J. Church, Mr B. King, Mrs J. Prior, and Mr P. Young. A special welcome was extended to the guest speaker, Dr K. Manley, and Mr C. Caladine, President of the Baptist Union of NSW, and representatives from the William Carey Christian School.

### Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the previous general meeting held on 4 February 1993, and as published in *The Recorder*, were confirmed.

### General Business

- The Society's sixth publication, *Religion in Colonial NSW*, by K.J. Cable was now available at a cost of \$5 per copy.
- Membership subscription fees were now due and payable.
- A special sale of the Society's earlier publications would be held at the August Meeting.
- Mr H. Watkin-Smith would be the speaker at the next meeting on 5 August, his subject being "The Special Significance of the Goulburn Church Centenary for the History of Baptists in NSW".

### Adoption of Annual Reports

- Adoption of the Secretary's Annual Report, as published in the last edition of *The Recorder*, was approved.
- Adoption of the Treasurer's Annual Report, as published in *The Recorder* and which had now been audited, was approved.

### Minutes of Appreciation

Following a suggestion from the Chairman, the meeting unanimously agreed that the minutes of appreciation as contained in the Secretary's Annual Report in respect of Mr H. Watkin-Smith and Mr M. Petras be included in the minutes:-

#### Mr H. Watkin-Smith

As intimated earlier, the 1992 Annual Meeting saw the retirement of the then chairman, Mr H. Watkin-Smith who had earlier announced that he would not be seeking re-election. Hubert has been an active member of the Society for some 19 years, 17 years of which he was a member of the executive. The Society owes him a great debt for his work over this time, especially in his role as chairman and also editor of *The Recorder*. Much of the high standing now enjoyed by the organisation is due to his efforts.

Mr Watkin-Smith found time to carry out extensive research into all aspects of the Baptist denomination culminating in the publication in 1986 of "Baptists in the Cradle City — the Story of the Parramatta Church". In his so-called retirement, he still hopes to be able to continue carrying out much needed research and documentation of our early history.

### Mr M. Petras

Another long-standing member, our treasurer Mr M. Petras, has indicated to the executive that he will not be standing for re-election this year. Michael has been an active member for some 14 years and has also contributed greatly to the advancement of the work of the Society. He has been the co-author of one of our publications, the editor of another and the author of *Extension or Extinction — Baptist Growth in NSW 1900-1939*. His knowledge and research ability will be greatly missed.

### Annual Elections

After bringing a greeting from the Baptist Union, the President Mr C. Caladine declared all positions vacant and conducted the election. The following members were elected:—

Chairman	Rev E.R. Rogers
Vice Chairman	Mr P.G. Young
Secretary	Mr O.C. Nannelli
Treasurer	Mr P.E. Hayward
Archivist	Rev E.A. Archer
Editor, <i>The Recorder</i>	Mr P.F. Blair
Essay Competition, Secretary	Mr P.G. Young

It was agreed that the position of auditor would be discussed at the next executive meeting.

### Guest Speaker

After resuming the chair, Rev E.R. Rogers again welcomed Dr K. Manley after briefly reiterating the debt owed him for the work he had done in the early formative years of the Society's existence.

Dr Manley then addressed the meeting on the topic "Our Heroic Carey — William Carey and Australian Baptists". At the conclusion of his well-researched and detailed talk, a lively discussion and question and answer session ensued.

A vote of thanks to Dr Manley was moved by Rev Seton Arndell.

### Close

The meeting was closed in prayer by the Chairman at 9.45 pm.

O.C.N.

## FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS TO *THE RECORDER*

People who have contributions or items for inclusion in the next issue of *The Recorder* are reminded that material must be in the hands of the Editor, Mr P. Blair, by 12 September 1993.

## THANKS

The Society wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to Mr H. Watkin-Smith, past Chairman of the Society and previous Editor (retired AGM 1993) of *The Recorder*, and Mr M. Petras, previous Treasurer, for their work to *The Recorder* and the Society over so many years. This was formally expressed at the Annual General Meeting and is recorded in the minutes.

## MORE THANKS

The Society wishes to place on record its appreciation to the Epping Church for their help in providing for this publication to be printed and collated.

## SEEKING HEALTH AND SEEKING SERVICE

An English Evangelist helps the NSW Home Mission

*Usually his name is written as Mr P. Russell-Hurditch (with a hyphen), sometimes as Mr Hurditch, sometimes as Mr Russell-Hurditch (with a hyphen), sometimes as Mr Russell Hurditch (without a hyphen), once as Evangelist Russell-Hurditch (with a hyphen) and once as Rev P. Hurditch. Let us call him*

### Mr Russell-Hurditch.

Mr Russell-Hurditch was a relation of Dr H. Grattan Guinness and made a visit to Australia hoping to build up his general health. He advised the NSW Union in the opening weeks of 1904 that he would like some evangelistic and pastoral work in the country districts.

The Home Mission seized the opportunity to send him to the mining town of Bodangora where the two men serving the Church there were both leaving.

The Rev J. Parker who had been pastor at Bodangora since his ordination in 1901 was leaving to visit England for medical treatment.

His assistant, Student-Pastor (later Rev) H.A. Pyke, after 14 months service there had left in January for England to study for the ministry at Harley House Training Institute (a foundation of Dr Grattan Guinness).

Reports from Bodangora indicated that Messrs Parker and Pyke had ministered with much acceptance accompanied by spiritual blessing and it was essential that they should be immediately replaced.

Mr Russell-Hurditch accepted the Home Mission's invitation to serve on an interim basis and offered to commence his ministry with a three weeks evangelistic mission at Bodangora and Wellington.

The Bodangora Church was well pleased with what they described as the sterling work of Mr Russell-Hurditch during the four months of his stay. A permanent appointment was made to Bodangora in August 1904 in the person of Student-Pastor F.J. Dunkley who had had experience as a Salvation Army Officer for several years prior to this appointment. It was

under Mr Dunkley that the centre of the district work moved to Wellington where Rev J. Parker had established a viable cause.

Meanwhile Mr Russell-Hurditch, back in Sydney, was being used in other ways. During October he preached at Paramatta and conducted a ten day mission at Petersham. The Petersham Church commented that his bright but forceful appeals made a deep impression on his hearers and that his talks to the young



were very effective. During November he supplied the Church at Goulburn which at that time was experiencing a pastorless period. For December and part of January he supplied the Church at Balmain.

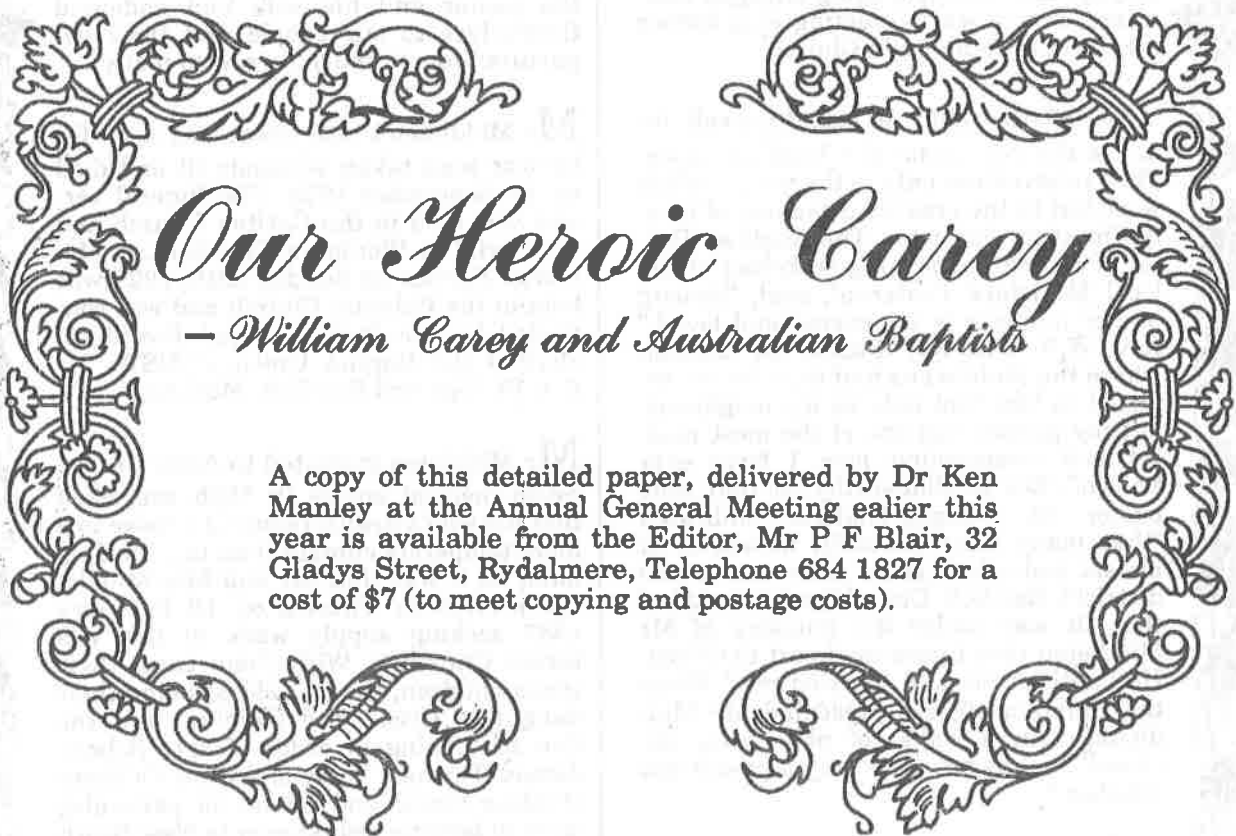
It was in 1905 that he made his greatest contribution when for several months he helped the Home Mission in establishing Baptist causes in the Northern Rivers districts of NSW. Early in 1905 Rev A.J. Waldock, Secretary of the Home Mission, made an exploratory survey of Baptists in the Richmond River valley and in April the Home Mission made new plans for the work there with headquarters moving from Coraki to Casino with a sub-branch at Ballina.

On 4 June Mr Russell-Hurditch commenced a cause at Casino and for the two

months of his stay gathered an encouraging and appreciative congregation. At his final service at Casino the Masonic Hall was crowded. Rev C.T. Way from Granville took over as Superintendent of the district from 6 August. Mr Russell-Hurditch commenced a cause at Ballina on 20 August and stayed there for several weeks until Pastor E. Pocknall took over as assistant to Mr Way. Mr Russell-Hurditch next moved to a new cause commenced at Maclean where he stayed for some months until Pastor Robert Goodman was appointed to the work there at the beginning of 1906. While in Maclean Mr Russell-Hurditch crossed swords with the Presbyterian minister on the subject of baptism. I have no record of any work undertaken in NSW after he left Maclean..

H.W-S

Sources: Baptist Journals and Home Mission records



## *Our Heroic Carey*

— *William Carey and Australian Baptists*

A copy of this detailed paper, delivered by Dr Ken Manley at the Annual General Meeting earlier this year is available from the Editor, Mr P F Blair, 32 Gladys Street, Rydalmere, Telephone 684 1827 for a cost of \$7 (to meet copying and postage costs).

**A LEAF IS NEVER SO BEAUTIFUL AS  
WHEN IT IS FADING.  
WHAT IS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE DECLINING  
DAYS OF A CHRISTIAN!**

Such was the heading in *The Australian Baptist* when describing the retirement of

**Rev Robert James Middleton**

Graduate of Spurgeon's College and Faithful Pastor in NSW for 41 years

**R.J. Middleton** was in his 80th year when in May 1929 he retired from the ministry and from his pastorate at Balmain. Every Church to which he had ministered as pastor in NSW (Marrickville, Thalaba, Carlton, Blackheath and Balmain) was represented at the Farewell meeting in a crowded Balmain Church. The President of the Baptist Union, Mr E.J. Phillips, being engaged elsewhere, sent a warm greeting as a former member of the Balmain Church.

The tributes paid at this Farewell indicate the reason for the heading above. They referred not only to the nature of his work but to the great-heartedness of lovely Christian character. The Anglican Rector of Balmain, speaking on behalf of the local Ministers' Fraternal, said, "Among us no minister is so revered and loved." Rev W.P. Phillips, Pastor at Carlton where the Middletons had their home, referred to him "not only as my neighbour, but my pastor, and one of the most modest and unassuming men I have ever known". Rev E. Clatworthy, at that time pastor at Dungog-Thalaba, indicated "that many have beautiful memories of his six and a half years pastorate in this district". Rev G.S. Cox of Pymble testified that "it was under the ministry of Mr Middleton that I gave my heart to Christ. He baptized me and married me." When the Balmain officers presented Mr Middleton with a wallet of notes they declared "he has been not only a pastor but a father."

These views expressed at the Farewell reflect the high regard in which references over the years indicate that this greatly loved pastor was held as a humble, loving and earnest Christian. As late as 1937 when the Marrickville Church issued its jubilee history it referred to the resignation in 1890 of Mr Middleton, their first pastor, in these terms: "both the pastor and his wife had endeared themselves to our people and their departure brought much sorrow to many".

Mr Middleton's retirement was short for he was soon taken seriously ill and died on 18 September 1929. The funeral service was held in the Carlton Church and the burial at Woronora Cemetery. A Memorial Service on Sunday 29th, 1929 was held in the Balmain Church and was conducted by the President and President-elect of the Baptist Union of NSW, Mr E.J. Phillips and Rev G.H. Morling.

Mr Middleton migrated to Australia because medical advice in 1886 suggested that his wife's health required a move to a more temperate climate than that in England. So it was that Mr and Mrs Middleton arrived in Victoria on 18 February 1887 seeking supply work in the Victorian Churches. With them came their seven children, the two eldest being their daughters Cissie and Caroline and the five sons being in order of age: Robert, James, Thomas, Percy and Fred. Of these children Cissie and Robert in particular were to become well known to New South Wales Baptists.

## THE ENGLISH BACKGROUND

Robert Middleton was born at Richmond in Surrey, England, on 10 December 1849 and was baptised at East Hill Baptist Church, Wandsworth, London, on the last Lord's Day of 1868. He was married to Elizabeth Whittle of London on 27 February 1872. He entered Spurgeon's College in 1872 and in January 1874 commenced his first pastorate in the Baptist Church at Caxton in Cambridgeshire. In 1876 he moved to the joint pastorate of Watchet and Williston on the northern coast of Somersetshire. From there in the early 1880s he moved into Devon as pastor at Torrington on the Torridge River, five miles from the famous port of Bideford.

## MINISTRY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

The intention of Mr Middleton to leave Torrington for Australia was early known in this country. *The NSW Baptist* of 1-1-1887 noted that Rev R.J. Middleton of Torrington is likely to take up work in Australia. In March 1887 it was reported that Mr Middleton had been given a purse of 72 pounds (a large sum in those days) on leaving Torrington and that he also received 28 pounds from the North Devon Auxiliary of Baptist Churches. The May 1887 issue indicated that during the absence of Rev J. Soper on holidays "Rev R.J. Middleton, who lately left the Church at Torrington with substantial presentations and testimonials of good will and esteem is supplying the pulpit at Petersham." It added the observation that the Committee should see if it could use him. However, nothing seems to have been done until November 1887 when the Home Mission Committee appointed him to the joint charge of Leichhardt (Hill Street) and Marrickville, and the Executive Committee recognised him as a ministerial member of the Baptist Union. However, Leichhardt, being unhappy with the arrangement withdrew from it.

## Marrickville

This Church was known by the Baptist Union as "The Church in the Wildwood". It was in a farming district with no nearby township. During his responses to the tributes at his farewell at Balmain he commented that he and his wife had painful experiences in having to ride many miles on horseback, as tyros, while visiting outlying preaching stations, but there were joyous times there. On one occasion after a Church meeting he had tried five times to disperse the people and when they finally left they did so singing hymns which were heard far out into the night. He was pastor there for almost seven years (until August 1897 and *The NSW Baptist* frequently reported baptisms by him in the Williams River. The first of his sons to be baptized was Thomas, one of five candidates baptized in the presence of 300 people in January 1895. Of the 22 who were baptized and joined the Church in 1896 were his sons Robert and Percy, two of the ten baptized in February that year.

## Carlton

Mr Middleton was welcomed to Carlton on 2nd September, 1897 and was pastor there until 1904. It seems that his resignation was brought about by ill-health which had also been a cause for concern in 1901. In 1898 the Church set itself the goal of eliminating the debt on the building by January 1899 to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the commencement in England of Mr Middleton's ministry. In February 1898 the Carlton Church commenced a branch Mission at Mortdale, the officers of the Mission all being members of Carlton. In June 1899 the Mission Committee, of which young James Middleton was the Secretary, commenced a Sunday School as part of this outreach. In 1904 a branch was commenced at Sans Souci by the Carlton Church.

## Blackheath

Towards the end of 1904 Mr Middleton moved to Blackheath and ministered there until the middle of 1907. It is interesting to note that he had been the Guest Preacher at the opening of the Blackheath Church building in December 1888 and later was to be present at and read the Scriptures at the laying of the foundation stone of the present building, 8th

September 1925. On leaving Blackheath and until 1913 Mr Middleton was engaged in supply work for our Churches. For part of that time, August 1907 to May 1910, he and Mrs Middleton were members at Harris Street Church.

### Balmain

In November 1913 when Rev P. Goodman moved from Balmain the Church there asked the Baptist Union Executive for advice and it was suggested that Rev R.J. Middleton be asked to supply temporarily until the settlement of another minister could be made. Mr Middleton remained as pastor for over 15 years until his retirement in May 1929.

### His wife

Mrs Middleton was a great encourager of her husband and throughout most of her life was a devoted Sunday School teacher. She entered on this work in the Field Lane Ragged School in London and was later the Superintendent of a large School in Conduit Street, London.

### His Family

The eldest child, Cissie, born 5th January 1873, baptized at Marrickville and a Sunday School teacher there, was the first member of a NSW Church to go out as a missionary for the NSW Baptist Missionary Society. At the age of 19 she was farewelled in the Harris Street Church during the Annual Meetings of the Baptist Union in October 1892. She married the New Zealand missionary, Rev John Ings, at Barisal Mission House on 27th May, 1902. She retired from the Mission in 1919 with her husband, both suffering from ill-health and went to live in his home in New Zealand.

The other daughter, Caroline, also baptized and a Sunday School teacher at Marrickville, at 18 joined the Sydney Methodist Mission and later married Mr George Austen.

The eldest son, Robert, was to become the first President of the NSW Theological College Council, being elected in October 1916 but his tenure was brief as in January 1917 he resigned, having been appointed a School Inspector at Braidwood. He was succeeded by Rev A.J. Waldock. In 1906 Robert had graduated B.A., and later was granted his M.A. In 1908 he was appointed lecturer in Mathematics at Sydney Teachers' College. In 1912 he was elected to the Education Committee of the Baptist Union and in 1916 became the first Secretary of the Theological College. For some years he represented Carlton Church on the Baptist Union Council, even after his move to Pymble and attendance at Hornsby Church.

The second son, James, was Secretary of the Carlton Sunday School for some years and when Carlton began the Mortdale Mission he was Secretary of the Mission Committee for three years. He was elected a Director of the YMCA in 1920.

Thomas held office in the Carlton Church for a time and was later a respected member at Concord. His son, Harold, was the foundation Secretary of the Springwood Church.

Percy died at an early age and Fred, after some time in business as a jeweller, became manager of Koala Park at West Pennant Hills.

#### Sources:

Baptist Union Year Books and Executive Committee Minutes  
Baptist Journals, viz: *The NSW Baptist*, *The Baptist*, *The Australian Baptist*.  
The Harris Street Church Roll.

Some help was received from Mr Harold Middleton of Springwood, who has kindly donated to our Archives a photo of the family taken prior to their departure from Devon, 1886.

H. Watkin-Smith